

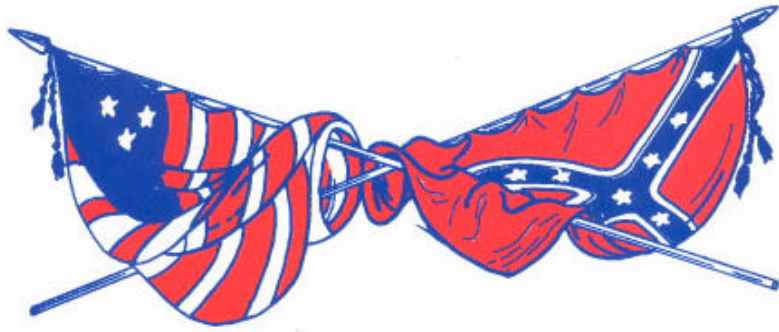
Vicksburg National Military Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Vicksburg National Military Park



BANNERS OF GLORY The Flags of North and South



The Significance of the Colors



The flag of a regiment was the symbol of its fighting spirit, to be held aloft at all times. In more practical terms, it was an aid to unit identification, a direction marker for the regiment's movement, or the rallying point if the regiment became scattered. It was a great disgrace if the flag was captured by the enemy; but also a great triumph if the opposition's flag fell into the regiment's hands.

The strength of an enemy's force could be estimated by the number of regimental colors he was flying, and of course each one served as a convenient aiming mark. The color bearer's position was the most dangerous in the regiment, and in many hard-fought battles the flag changed hands several times as successive bearers were hit.

The Stars and the Stripes

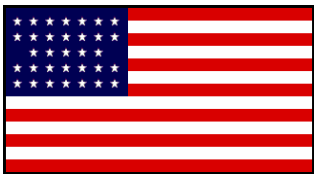


Since the first official United States flag was adopted on June 14, 1777, displaying 13 stars and stripes for each of the 13 liberated American colonies, our national banner has been through 27 versions, the most recent introduced on July 4, 1960 when Hawaii was admitted as our 50th state.

Four of these official versions, displaying 33, 34, 35, and 36 stars, were in service during the most troubled era of our

nation's history, the American Civil War. Because specifications for the size, shape, and precise coloring of United States flags were not introduced until the 20th century, flags of the Civil War period varied greatly. This variation was most evident in the star pattern of Civil War flags, since the application of each individual star was done by hand and no official star pattern existed until 1912.

33 Stars: The Fort Sumter Flag

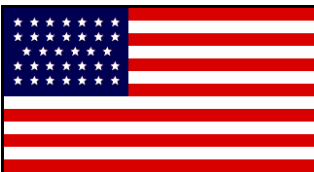


The 15th official American flag of 33 stars was adopted on July 4, 1859, commemorating Oregon's statehood. This flag was flying over Fort Sumter at the time of its bombardment by Southern forces on April 12-13, 1861.

When Sumter fell to the Confederates, Major Robert Anderson hauled down the

flag and carried it with him as he and his fellow soldiers marched out of the fort. Four years later, when Federal forces once again occupied this stronghold in Charleston Harbor, Major General Anderson raised over the fort, the same flag he had hauled down in 1861.

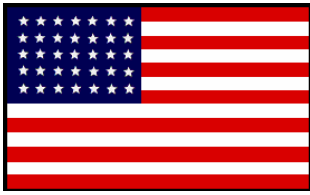
34 Stars: Kansas Statehood



The 16th official American flag was adopted on July 4, 1861, to commemorate the admission of Kansas as the nation's 34th state. One of the key issues precipitating the outbreak of the Civil War was the westward expansion of slavery. Nowhere was this issue more controversial than in the Kansas territory.

Following the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854, violence erupted between anti-slavery and pro-slavery groups in what became known as "*Bleeding Kansas*." It was in "*Bleeding Kansas*" where John Brown first made a name for himself after he and seven others massacred five pro-slavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek.

35 Stars: West Virginia Statehood

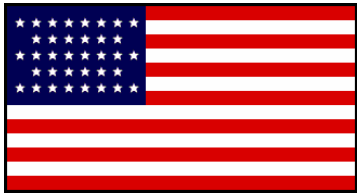


The 17th official American flag, displaying 35 stars, was adopted July 4, 1863, when West Virginia was admitted to the Union. The new state of West Virginia was formed from the 35 counties of Virginia west of the Shenandoah Valley.

Slaves and slave owners were rare in this mountainous region of the state and for

decades the mountaineers had complained about lack of representation in the state legislature. A western newspaper reported that *"Western Virginia has suffered more from...her eastern brethren than ever the Cotton States all put together have suffered from the North."*

36 Stars: Nevada Statehood

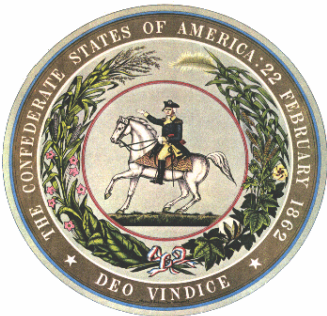


The 18th official American flag, containing 36 stars, was adopted July 4, 1865, to commemorate Nevada's statehood. Nevada became a state on October 31, 1864 in time to lend support to Abraham Lincoln's bid

for re-election in November. Though not officially adopted until July 4, 1865, after the surrender of Confederate forces, the new flag of 36 stars was made and flown well in advance.



The Flags of the Confederacy



For the first twenty-four days of the existence of their government, the Confederate States of America had no officially approved flag. When Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the provisional government on February 18, 1861, the capitol building in Montgomery flew the flag of the State of Alabama, and the inaugural parade was led by a company of infantry carrying the flag of Georgia.

Nonetheless, the Confederate States were determined to fly a flag that expressed their own sovereignty. The first official Confederate flag was chosen from hundreds of designs submitted by citizens from all over the country. It was adopted on March 4, 1861, the same day that Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the foreign United States. This first official banner was completed within two hours of its adoption and was hoisted over the capitol building in Montgomery by Miss Le titia Christian Tyler, the granddaughter of former President John Tyler.

The "Bonnie Blue Flag"



Tracing its origin to the early 1800's during a border dispute with Spain, the *"Bonnie Blue Flag"* was for years used as a symbol of Southern independence.

It served as the unofficial flag of the Confederacy until it was replaced by the *"Stars and Bars."*

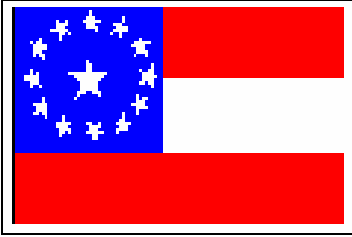
First National Flag: The "Stars and Bars"



1861

Though the Confederate States had formally seceded from the United States, the elements of their first national flag reflected a sentimental attachment to *"Old Glory."* The blue canton of the United States flag was retained and stars were used

to represent the seceded states. Likewise, the thirteen red and white stripes of the United States flag were replaced by red and white "bars." The first *"Stars and Bars"* displayed seven stars for the first seven states that seceded from the Union.

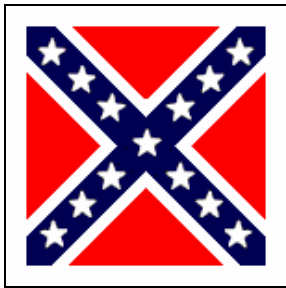


1861-1863

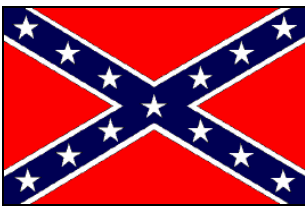
After the fall of Fort Sumter, the number of states increased to nine with the admission of Virginia and Arkansas. The circle grew to eleven when North Carolina and Tennessee joined the Confederacy. Although the Confederate states never

officially numbered more than eleven, the final version of the first national Confederate flag contained thirteen stars representing the secession governments of Kentucky and Missouri.

Confederate Battle Flag: The "Southern Cross"



Battle Flag (Eastern Theatre)



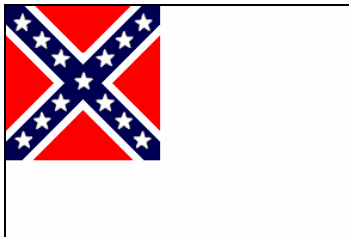
Naval Flag (Eastern Theatre)

Ironically, it was the *"Stars and Bars"* resemblance to the *"Stars and Stripes"* that led to its demise. At the First Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run) on July 21, 1861, the smoke and dust of battle made it difficult to distinguish between the two red, white, and blue banners. As a result, General P.G.T. Beauregard, who had handled the field operations at Bull Run, proposed that the Confederate soldiers should carry a distinct flag into battle to avoid future confusion. Beauregard contacted the Chairman of the Committee on Flag and Seal, William Porcher Miles of South Carolina, about changing the flag. Chairman Miles suggested the design that he had submitted to be the first national flag of the Confederacy. This now familiar red flag with a blue saltire decorated with white stars was ridiculed as *"a pair of suspenders"*

when first proposed. Nevertheless, Beauregard liked the design and this *"pair of suspenders,"* also known as the *"Southern Cross,"* was first issued as the Battle Flag of the Confederate Army of the Potomac in November of 1861.

Actually, there were a number of different battle flags used by the Confederacy. Those used in the Eastern theatre were fairly uniform, but the flags used in the Western theatre of operations were more diverse in their styles and patterns. Because the *"Southern Cross"* was never officially established as *the* battle flag of the Confederacy, and due to the remoteness of the Western operations, commanders in the West had already adopted and issued their own distinctive battle flags to avoid the confusion caused by the *"Stars and Bars."*

Second National Flag: The "Stainless Banner"

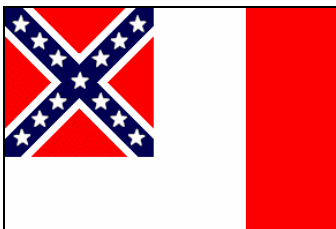


1863

As the Civil War extended from weeks into months, the sentimental feelings felt for the *"Stars and Stripes"* began to wane. More and more Confederate citizens came to see what one member of Congress referred to as *"the old gridiron"* as the symbol of oppression and imperialistic aggression. Consequently, because the *"Stars and Bars"* was too closely aligned with the enemy's national banner, a second national flag was adopted by the Confederacy on May 1, 1863. The Battle Flag or *"Southern Cross"* was placed in the canton of this new flag

and a solid white field was substituted for the red and white bars. This flag was referred to as the *"Stainless Banner"* because of its pure white field, and was proclaimed emblematic of the purity of the Cause that it represented. Since the first manufactured *"Stainless Banner"* was used to drape the coffin of Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, who died after tragically being shot by one of his own regiments at the Battle of Chancellorsville, this flag is sometimes referred to as the *"Jackson Flag."*

Third National Flag



1865

The *"Stainless Banner"* solved the problem of a clear national identity for the Confederacy, but the second national flag was often mistaken for a flag of truce when it hung limply around the staff. As a result, a new flag was created in which a broad, red, vertical bar was added to the fly end of the *"Stainless Banner."* This third and final

flag of the Confederacy was adopted on March 4, 1865, exactly four years after the first Confederate flag was approved. Its official life, however, was short-lived. Just thirty-six days later, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Courthouse and the days of the Confederacy soon drew to a close.



Flags That Have Flown Over Mississippi

Pledge to the Mississippi State Flag - I salute the flag of Mississippi and the sovereign state for which it stands with pride in her history and achievements and with confidence in her future under the guidance of Almighty God.

- Reference Miss. Code Ann., Section 37-13-7 (1972)

	Bourbon Flag of France (1682 - 1763) - The first flag that whipped in the Mississippi breeze stemmed from the arrival of Sieur de La Salle, the French explorer who in 1682 claimed the Mississippi River area for his king, Louis XIV. This flag flew over Mississippi forts at Ocean Springs (Fort Maurepas) and Natchez, until the French were ousted in 1763.
	British Red Ensign (1763 - 1779) - England gained these lands in 1763 -- when France, along with Spain and their Indian allies, lost the French and Indian War to England. Then England took possession of the northern half of Mississippi (as part of its Georgia colony) and the southern half of Mississippi (as part of its West Florida colony). During this era, the flag flew in Vicksburg and Natchez and opposed the Americans in the Revolutionary War, farther north.
	Spanish Flag of Castile and Leon (1779 - 1785) - In 1779, during the reign of Charles III, Jose Galvez seized West Florida from England while England was busy in the Revolutionary War. Galvez then unfurled this banner of Spain in Pascagoula, Natchez and Vicksburg. In 1785, the Spanish flag changed to an emblem called the Spanish Bars of Aragon. A portion of Mississippi remained under Spain until 1798.
	U.S. Star Spangled Banner (1798 - 1818) - In 1798, Mississippi became a U.S. territory and this flag continued to fly as the Mississippi Territory was expanded. In 1810, the Republic of West Florida (including Mississippi coastal counties) became U.S. land. Later, Choctaw and Chickasaw Indian lands were added to the territory. This U.S. flag also waved in 1817, as Mississippi was admitted as the 20th U.S. state.
	Republic of West Florida (74 days in 1810) - In 1810, southernmost Mississippi became part of the Republic of West Florida. Then this banner, known as the Bonnie Blue Flag, flew over Mississippi coastal counties. Before this, the U.S. believed it already had acquired southernmost Mississippi when it bought the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. But Spain refused to evacuate the area. So, in 1810, American settlers rebelled against the Spanish and drove them east. The Americans then formed the Republic of West Florida and applied for U.S. statehood. President James Madison responded that West Florida already was in the Louisiana Purchase and ordered officials to take possession. Then, that area was added to the Mississippi Territory. In 1861, this flag resurfaced at the Old Capitol in Jackson, where Mississippi had just passed the Ordinance of Secession. Its lone star, again, symbolized a claim of independence.
	Mississippi Magnolia Flag (1861) - January 9, 1861 -- Mississippi voted to secede from the Union. For a few weeks, the old Bonnie Blue Flag of 1810 was the new Sovereign Republic of Mississippi informal symbol. But on January 26, the republic adopted a new flag with the Bonnie Blue Flag in its canton and a magnolia tree in its center field. When the Sovereign Republic of Mississippi joined the Confederate States of America, on March 27, the short-lived Magnolia flag was replaced by the Confederacy's flag.
	Stars and Bars of the Confederacy (1861 - 1863) - On March 4, 1861, the first flag of the Confederate States of America was born in Montgomery, Alabama.
	State of Mississippi Flag (1894 - present) - Adopted by the Mississippi Legislature in 1894.

(Source: Myers, Leslie R. (1987, July 12) *Banners Symbolize Eras Over Which They Waved. The Clarion-Ledger*)
(Flag photos courtesy of www.anyflag.com)